

## A Road by Any Other Name

By TONY KELSO

It is puzzling to figure out how certain streets in Duxbury received their names. Many streets have also had their names changed over the years, yet often the reasons remain obscure. The naming of streets in Duxbury began in the 1830s and picked up steam in the 1890s and early 1900s.



Before then, the main roads and back lanes in official documents like deeds, often were descriptions; "the highway between Plymouth and Boston" (High and Summer Streets) or "the road between Daniel Hall's and the Bluefish River" (Washington St.). With the pace of American society accelerating after the Civil War, street naming became important for many reasons, even in sleepy small towns like Duxbury.

Bay Road was built in the 1840s to make it easier for people from Duxbury village to reach the Kingston railroad station. It originally was known as Border Street, since it bordered the Bay. In 1915 the town voted to change the name to Bay Road. Why and who was behind the change, the records don't reveal. Railroad Avenue was originally Station Street from 1871-1939, but after the railroad stopped running and Millbrook station closed, it gradually slid into being called Railroad Avenue.

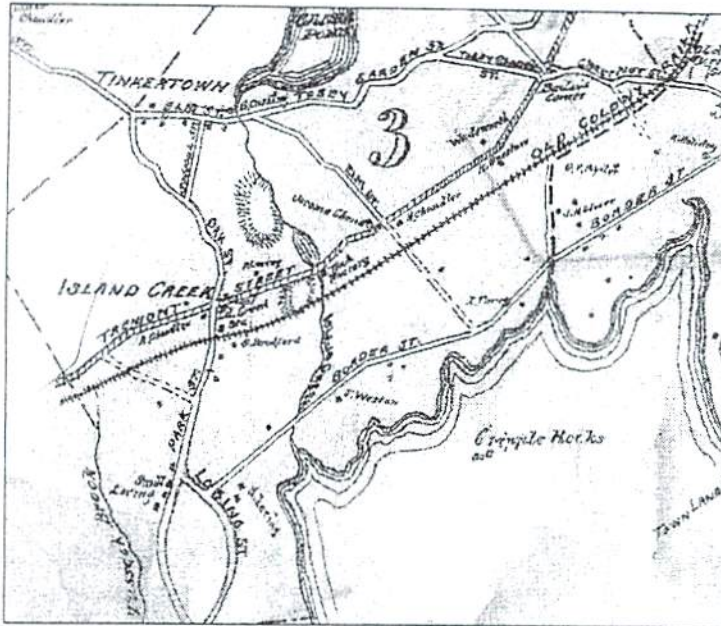
St. George Street was first known as Harmony Street. After the death of George Wright Jr. in 1888 in a Boston elevator accident, his grief-stricken family renamed the street in honor of him. The Wright family's wealth and stature in Duxbury allowed them to rename the street they lived on. At about the same time, the part of St. George Street parallel to the Bluefish River was known as Front Street, with Cedar Street being

called Back Street. One of the influential Gifford family bought a house on Back Street but refused to live on a street with that name, so had the two street names changed to suit her sensibilities.

Church Street never had a church building on it and was named for Benjamin Church, famous in King Philip's War, whose farm is the Weston Farms neighborhood today. Originally, however, the street was known as "Peg Road." Peg was an old African-American woman, probably a freed slave, who lived in a small hut in the woods off the road. She lived around the time of the Revolution and was one of the people we only get fleeting glimpses of who lived on the fringes of society in small towns like Duxbury. Another interesting street name change was Shipyard Lane, originally called "Somerville Avenue" after the town next to Cambridge. At about 1900 the name was changed to the historically more sedate Shipyard Lane, since Somerville was a decidedly blue collar town, and the original name was felt "not appropriate" to some people.

Longtime Standish Shore residents know that Marshall Street from the Eagles Nest Creek bridge to Massasoit Road was originally known as Columbus Avenue until 1959. Marshall Street only ran from the corner of Standish Street to the bridge. Both names were original to the cottage

development of the 1870s and probably reflect the Boston street names where the original investors had their businesses. Some feel Marshall Street reflected the name Marshall Soule whose farm at the Brewster lilacs was developed in the cottage lots. Whatever the origin of the name, it all became Marshall Street in 1959.



An 1894 map of Duxbury shows when Bay Road was known as Border Street.

**"Object Lesson Road" in North Duxbury was built in 1913 but this fascinating name didn't stick."**

Taylor Street in West Duxbury was first called Goose Lane, and Chapel and Sunset Roads were known as Free Trade and Tariff streets originally, reflecting someone's strong political views. "Object Lesson Road" in North Duxbury was built in 1913 but this fascinating name didn't stick and the street it became is still a mystery.

Even today name changing continues as new neighborhoods grow and change. In the 1960s Cottontail Lane became Flintlock Drive. In the 1980s Sashmanesh Drive (the Native American name for cranberry) became Fox Run and just a few months ago Butternut Drive and Lewis Farm Road became the same name since the roads are now linked. Like the layers of dirt, tar and asphalt that now cover our roads, street names in Duxbury have layers too.